

VZCZCXRO8752

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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 1053
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1515
RHFMIUU/AFSOUTH NAPLES IT PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR TF FALCON PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEPGEA/CDR650THMIGP SHAPE BE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC PRIORITY
RUZEJAA/USNIC PRISTINA SR PRIORITY

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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR DRL, INL, EUR/SCE, CA
NSC FOR HELGERSON
USUN FOR MCBRIDE
EUR/ACE FOR GUPMAN

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [CMGT](#) [CVIS](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KV](#)
SUBJECT: ROLLING OUT THE KOSOVO PASSPORT

REF: PRISTINA 74

¶1. (U) This is an Action Request. Please see paragraphs 8 and 9.

¶2. (SBU) Summary. On July 29 the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MOIA) plans to issue the first Republic of Kosovo passport. Contrary to UNMIK's stated plans in February about its readiness to assist Kosovo in this task (reftel), it has largely stepped back from the process, leading to concerns about the preparedness of European and other countries to accept Kosovo's passport as a legitimate travel document. Early feedback suggests several key destinations for Kosovars: Germany, Switzerland, and the UK are prepared to recognize and facilitate visas for holders of Kosovo passports. Other countries to which Kosovars travel visa-free, including Macedonia, Montenegro and Turkey, have also indicated they are ready to accept the document. Several members of the Schengen zone, however, including France and Italy, are predicting bureaucratic delays. Embassy Pristina has had assurances from U.S. immigration authorities that the Kosovo passport will be accepted, but we need to confirm that all necessary steps have been taken for final approval and dissemination of information to ports of entry. We have sent samples of the passport to EUR/SCE for further distribution within the USG. UNMIK has stated that current holders of UNMIK travel documents (TD) will be able to use them until they expire - generally two years from date of issue. End Summary.

¶3. (SBU) Kosovo's Ministry of Internal Affairs introduced the first Republic of Kosovo passports on July 29. Contrary to earlier expectations of assistance and guidance from UNMIK (reftel), the MOIA has largely had to manage the switchover on its own. Because it chose the same company that produced the UNMIK TD to produce its passport, production of the UNMIK TD had to cease in order to produce the new document. As of last week, the supply of UNMIK TDs was expected to be exhausted. UNMIK does not plan to produce any more TDs for Kosovo.

14. (SBU) Over the past several months, the MOIA has engaged with a group of experts from the European Commission (EC), most recently on July 24, in preparation for this rollout. A readout of the July 24 meeting indicated that by-and-large the EC believes Kosovo is ready to perform this function. The passport is up to European security standards, civil registry procedures are adequate, and they believe the MOIA has sufficient capacity to issue the passport.

Lack of ISO Code for Kosovo

15. (SBU) One technical issue raised was the lack of an International Standards Organization (ISO) code for Kosovo and Kosovo's use of "RKS" - a designation which is not currently used by any other country, but which is also not recognized at ports of entry. Because RKS is not a recognized ISO code, when passports are scanned at ports of entry, an error message will show. However, we understand this is not an unusual occurrence and immigration authorities routinely add this piece of information manually.

16. (SBU) The EC team advised the MOIA that the use of RKS was not desired by some EU representatives, but its use would not prohibit a Kosovo citizen from entering or exiting a country that issued a visa in the passport or otherwise would permit the entry of that Kosovo citizen. It asked whether Kosovo would consider using XXX or XXXK, codes that denote refugee

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status. The MOIA rejected this, as it felt such a code was inappropriate for an independent country.

Acceptance in Europe

17. (SBU) We have reached out to liaison offices and embassies in Pristina to gauge readiness to accept the new passport among countries which have recognized Kosovo. Switzerland, Germany, and the UK, all with significant Kosovar populations, have stated they are ready to receive travelers using the Kosovo passport, and they will issue bilateral visas to permit travel. Neighboring countries, including Macedonia, Albania, Greece and Turkey, are reportedly ready to accept the passport, but, it is not clear whether the necessary ground work has been laid with their immigration services. We are following up. We have also heard that several Schengen countries, including France and Italy, are predicting significant delays in recognition of this new document, including with the issuance of Schengen visas.

18. (SBU) Action Request: Post asks that the Department encourage EU member states, as well as relevant authorities in Brussels responsible for Schengen-related issues, to recognize the new Kosovo passport and to provide its bearers with the same privileges, including issuance of Schengen visas, that holders of the UNMIK TD have enjoyed to date.

Acceptance at U.S. Ports of Entry

19. (SBU) Action Request: Post has received assurances from the Bureau of Consular Affairs that visas may be issued in the new passport, and with confirmation that the passport meets U.S. security standards, there should be no obstacle to its use by bonafide travelers. We have sent samples to the Kosovo Desk at the Department of State and ask that they be shared with relevant authorities within the USG in order to facilitate the introduction of this new passport into our immigration systems.

Comment

¶10. (SBU) In addition to the assistance we are providing the MOIA in the rollout of its new passport through our ICITAP program, we are working intensively to ensure that a secure and tightly controlled system for application and issuance of the passport is employed. The MOIA is fully aware that the integrity of this system is a critical component of ensuring the Kosovo passport receives widespread acceptance internationally. We will report the details of these efforts via septel.
KAIDANOW